

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of Youngstown State University Project

Director of Youngstown College Library

O. H. 362

DR. GEORGE JONES

Interviewed

by

Terence Lynch

on

May 4, 1977

## Dr. George Jones

Dr. George Jones' childhood was spent in Mt. Vernon, Ohio. After attending high school Dr. Jones entered Oberlin College from which he received his degree in English. After Oberlin Dr. Jones enrolled at Harvard University to complete his post-graduate work. He worked two years teaching English at the University of Rochester. World War II interrupted Dr. Jones' teaching. He joined the Navy and served two and one half years in the South Pacific.

In 1946, Dr. Jones went back to teaching. However, he soon decided that another field would be best for him, Library Science. He entered Lawrence College in Wisconsin to study Library Science. From Lawrence College Dr. Jones went to Kent State University to work on his masters, which he received in June of 1957. He was hired by Youngstown College in September of 1957.

Since coming to Youngstown State University the library has grown in leaps and bounds. Much of the advancement can be attributed to Dr. Jones' perserverance. In 1975, Dr. Jones retired as head librarian and now spends his leisure time reading and visiting his old friends at Youngstown State University.

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INTERVIEWEE: DR. GEORGE JONES

INTERVIEWER: Terence Lynch

SUBJECT: University Librarian, Discipline, Concerts, Operas,  
Administration, Professors

DATE: May 4, 1977

L: This is an interview with Dr. George Jones for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on the History of Youngstown State University. The interview is by Terence Lynch at 417 South Main Street, Poland, Ohio. The date is May 4, 1977, at 2:00 p.m.

Dr. Jones, would you please speak about a little bit of your background previous to coming to Youngstown University?

J: I was born in Mt. Vernon, Ohio, and I did my undergraduate college work at Oberlin College. Then I did my graduate work and received my doctor's degree from Harvard. I taught first at the University of Rochester in Rochester, New York. And it was from there that I was drafted into World War II and spent two and a half years in the South Pacific on a landing ship. After the war I went to Lawrence College in Wisconsin, where I taught ten years. Then I decided I wanted to stop teaching and be a librarian, so I took a master's degree in library science at Kent State University, and from there I came to Youngstown University in September of 1957.

L: Was there anything special to the college or area that played a role in your decision to come to Youngstown College?

J: The first day I came here I had a feeling this place needed me. I had never seen as loosely structured and undisciplined a college in my life. When I walked into that beautiful new library, which was covered with cigarette stubs and people sitting all over the tables, the entire

place in commotion, I thought I would like to come here and straighten it out. This was my very first impression.

L: What was the college like when you came here?

J: It was not a very serious academic atmosphere. The students were given complete freedom to do as they pleased. Many of the jobs which in another institution would have been performed by a faculty member or a clerical person were handled by students. On the library staff there were many students. The order department didn't have a professional librarian; all the ordering was done by students and the whole atmosphere was one of easygoing, good nature. I felt welcome. Everybody was glad to see me when I arrived and the spirit of the place was very friendly.

L: What was a typical day like for you at the university?

J: I came as director of the library, and I had a very pleasant office. I made the rounds of the building when I first arrived in the morning. Because of the discipline problems, I felt that that was the essential thing to do first. Then I had to consult with the heads of each of the departments of the library to see if they had any questions and if they had anything that I needed to know about. Then I went back to my desk, and since we didn't have an order librarian, I did all of the book selection myself with the help of book requests which came in from the faculty. My day was largely occupied in the ordering of books. In fact, as long as I was the librarian, that was one of the most important things to me, to build up the book collection. I was not as interested in administrative details as I was in the book collection.

I didn't say enough about the relation with the faculty when you asked about a typical day. I went always to lunch at the college cafeteria, and in the old cafeteria there was one room for the faculty, not a very big room so that we were all crowded in there. There was a very congenial atmosphere; we all knew each other quite well and had many intimate jokes in common so that if one of us said something, two or three others in the neighborhood knew what the gist of that was and would enter into the merriment. For instance, there was a nice elderly lady in the catalog department, Miss Newcomb. I referred to her as "Lightening" because she was a very slow mover, and whenever I mentioned "Lightening" to anybody, everybody there knew who I meant.

There were many faculty concerts by the school of music faculty. They were held in the auditorium in the main hall which is an extremely difficult place to have a

concert because there was always disturbance in the halls outside the auditorium so that it did disrupt the music. The dramatic association gave as many plays at the beginning of my stay here as they do now I would think, and once a year the school of music put on an opera. All of these were put on in the auditorium in the main hall. The operas were extremely well done for the small amount of money that was spent on them for costuming and scenery. The director of the operas was Madame Clove, a former opera singer who taught voice in the school of music. I look back on those operas each year as highlights of my early days in Youngstown.

L: How long was your day?

J: It was always nine to five. Before I came I had taught for many years, and one of the things that I liked about it was the idea that I was there from nine to five. However, for the first five or six years, I took reference desk duty one evening a week because we didn't have enough professional librarians to last the five nights that we were open. We only had four professionals, and we insisted that there should be one professional in the library when it was open, so I worked one night a week at the desk, answering reference questions for the first five or six years that I was here.

L: Who were the outstanding professors and administrators in the years that you spent at Youngstown State University?

J: I would place Carl Dykema as one of the outstanding professors. He was the chairman of the English department. He was a scholarly man and very widely read. He was, of all the faculty, the one who was best acquainted with the library. He was in the library very often. I prized his friendship very highly and his advice. Whenever there was a problem about whether or not I should spend a large amount of money on a certain book or set of books and I wanted to talk to somebody who would have the welfare of the whole university at heart, I would talk to Carl Dykema and his advice I found was extremely helpful.

L: How were the administrators?

J: The administration was very loose. I had not been accustomed to an administration which didn't insist on work getting done and good teaching being performed. The administration did not oversee the faculty as I had always been accustomed. Many teachers were extremely lax in their teaching. The students would tell me about it and I knew that this situation existed. Many teachers walked into class without making any preparation. Many simply read out of a book for the length of the class time, and examinations were not held by some teachers on the

exact schedule that was issued by the administration, but they would give the examination early and disappear before the term ended. Many of the teachers were spouses of other faculty members or alumni of the university who were hired to teach simply because they were in the area and applied for the job.

L: What were the students like when you first came to Youngstown?

J: There were very many good students, whereas the majority were undisciplined and were here only to have a good time. There was a corpus of very substantial students. There was a need for a university in this community. There were many students who couldn't afford to go elsewhere and who had the ability and had gotten accustomed to reading and studying. There were many who worked in the library who were doing almost full-time jobs in the library and yet were keeping up their academic work and doing extremely well. There was a need in this community for the university. It couldn't have been stopped from developing because there was this corpus of serious students who formed the university; they made the university.

L: How are they different today?

J: I don't see the wastrels around as much now as I did when I first came. They may be there, but I don't happen to run into them. When I am on the campus, I am always in the library or at a concert or at a play where the more serious students would be anyhow. But part of it is not just a change in Youngstown University, but a general change in students throughout the country. There were times back in the 1960's when the students--not only at Youngstown University, but in other places--were up in arms against the Vietnam War and were protesting, making scenes.

I was one of the few faculty who joined with them in marching in opposition to the Vietnam War and getting tomatoes thrown at me, and vituperations poured on me by people standing at the curb. I felt very strongly that the students were right and I wanted to support them. I had a serious disagreement with the administration during that time because I did agree with the protestors.

L: In what way is the university itself different from it was in the 1950's?

J: There is a discipline now which we didn't have then. Part of it comes from having money. Everything is luxurious now; all the beautiful new buildings have made it more like a big university. Now say the question again.

L: In what ways is the university itself different from

the 1950's?

J: Now, I don't find that there are as many people who are teaching there for the love of it as there were then. I get the feeling every once in a while that the attraction is for the money rather than for the satisfaction of teaching. There were many devoted teachers in the early days. One that comes first to mind was Mrs. Morgan in the ancient language department. She taught Latin and Greek, and she was an extremely hard worker and taught a full schedule and was very serious. She was interested in all of her students and she wasn't doing it for the money. She didn't get much money. Fortunately, her husband had a good job. But there were people at that time that weren't here for the money. And I felt that I was here because the place needed me and I felt that I was doing something for the good of mankind. It was a very gratifying experience.

L: Do you think that the main difference in the university now is that it has become a state institution rather than a private institution? Do you think that factor has a lot to do with where the university is now?

J: I suppose that has a great deal to do with it, yes. Yes, I think you are right. I do have the feeling that it is a state institution. I was always extremely careful, for instance, and frugal with office supplies. I notice now every time I am in the library that there are pencils on the tables and half used tablets of paper. In the old days, this wouldn't have happened. We were all quite frugal in our use of office supplies.

L: What were some of the campus activities, both student and faculty, in the early days?

J: Well, the ones that I liked best were by the dramatic association, which put on very good plays. The chemistry department had a very active chemistry club. I am not sure if that is what they called it. The Spanish department had a very active club, and you were aware of them. They gave a scholarship each year and they put on a book sale every year; that was one thing that I was interested in. This was to raise money so that every year they sent one student to a Spanish-speaking country for the summer. There was a women's service sorority and a men's service fraternity that I was aware of. It seemed that they were always coming to ask if there were any good works the library needed to have done. So whenever we gave something such as an open house in order to advertise the library's availability to donors of books and gifts, it was those students who made the punch and cookies and served

refreshments at the receptions and greeted people at the door and did that sort of thing.

L: Do you think the university is more academically oriented now than it was previously?

J: Yes, in general. The entire, all-over picture is of much more serious academic caliber, although there are not as many devoted teachers as there were in the beginning. I think of Mr. Dykema in English, Mr. Scuddor in chemistry, Mr. Worleg in biology, and Mr. Wilcox, the head of the education department. These were very serious scholars of a caliber which is equal, if not superior, of any of the serious scholars who are there now.

L: What was President Jones like?

J: He was oriented aurally. That is everything entered his mind by means of his ears. He was not a reader, nor a writer; he communicated by speaking to people, by hearing things and speaking. He was completely under the influence of Dean Smith, and that was a very interesting relationship. Dean Smith had been his teacher at Hiram. He majored under Dean Smith, and when he had finished college, Dean Smith was acquainted with the people at Youngstown and they were looking for a young man to be the admission director, which in those days meant that you had to go out and find students. So Howard Jones was hired as the director of admissions at the college which was not called director of admissions then, but was called the assistant to the director.

When the director died, the board of trustees said that they had a man here who is the assistant and they wanted to make him the director, so they appointed Jones as the director of the college. And in turn, his mentor at Hiram had recommended him to this job, so he brought in his mentor from Hiram to be the Dean of the college and the two worked together over the years. Then the title was changed from director to president. Dean Smith was really the person on whom the president depended in all decisions as long as the two were working together. He admired him greatly and anything Dean Smith wanted to do, President Jones went along with him.

I think perhaps one of the outstanding things that I can recall about the president was that in making appointments both to faculty and staff, he appointed people who were already here. He didn't go outside to get a capable person; he hired somebody who was already here and their relatives. His daughters were on the faculty, and their husbands also. His nephew, Mr. Hurd, was hired to teach here, and his niece, Mrs. Johnson, was hired to teach here.



Even the college carpenter, Mr. Notman, was a cousin of the president. He also hired Dean Smith's relatives. Mrs. Smith was the recorder and the Smith niece, Ivis Boyer, was the president's secretary. Her niece, Betty Boyer, was secretary to the business manager and Dean Smith's niece, Mrs. Foley, taught in communications. Her husband, Mr. Foley, was in the public speaking department. The dean's nephew, James Mitchell, was the receptionist in the president's office, and his nephew, Kim Boyer, worked in records. I would go on because the ramifications of the relatives of the president and the dean were myriad. It was a family corporation to some extent because all the relatives of both the president and the dean were employed in the university.

L: Did this make for a very close-knit university say in the 1950's among the administrators and faculty members?

J: Yes, I think it did. Yes, I think you worded it well. There was a unity in that respect, yes.

L: What do you think made Youngstown different from other colleges?

J: Well, one of the main differences when I first came was the hiring of students to do so many things. Students did most of the taking care of the registration and keeping of the records. Mrs. Smith, who was the recorder, had 55 students working in the records office which was in the basement of the library, unfortunately, because all 55 of her students went through the library all the time. Nobody ever entered that office from the outside basement door; everybody entered from the other one going through the library and visiting with their friends on their way to the records office. What was the rest of that question?

L: What do you think made Youngstown different from other colleges?

J: Ah, yes. Well, that use of students was a great difference. There was also the hiring of people who had other jobs in the community. Many of the faculty were part-time people who had jobs. Clerks in stores were very widely used in the university as teachers in business administration and other courses.

L: Were there any codes of dress or codes of discipline?

J: No, I was never aware of any code of dress or any code of discipline. From the top down there was an obvious lack of discipline. I remember the first day I was here seeing the dean of the university walk through the library smoking a cigarette and stamping it out on the floor. It was a shock to me. That afternoon there was a

faculty meeting on the third floor of the library in the audio-visual room, and the dean lead the audience in smoking. There was not a code of discipline in the institution.

- L: Were the faculty members required to wear any certain type of dress?
- J: Never, no they weren't.
- L: How was the university promoted to the general public in terms of getting students to come?
- J: The Vindicator was a great friend of the university. It built it up in any article that the Vindicator published about the university, always in very glowing terms. Also they did not publish anything that happened at the university that was adverse, even an automobile accident that took place there. If it was at the university and if it was adverse, it was never published in the Vindicator. They didn't ever say anything of that kind, and photographs of anything that the publicity director, Miss Flint, sent down to the Vindicator were always published. Some of them I thought weren't worthy of usage, but if Miss Flint sent it to them, they used it, no matter what a poor photograph it was. It was largely the Vindicator which was the means of promotion, I would say.
- L: How was the campus itself, like in terms of the buildings? How has it grown over the years?
- J: When I came all of the buildings were the main hall, the old Wick Mansion next door and the garage to that mansion, a series of barracks left over from World War II, and the new library. The maintenance was entirely lacking. By the time I came the influx of returning veterans had arrived, so the enrollment was, I believe, around five thousand. There was ample money, and it was no longer such a poor institution with all these students paying tuition. The administration was not in the habit of spending money on upkeep so the litter and unkept appearance of the place was rather depressing, very shocking in fact. It was crowded, and just not well kept, and nobody oversaw the cleaning women. There were cleaning women who were to arrive at the library at ten o'clock and were supposed to work all night and have it cleaned in the morning, but there was no supervision so the cleaning women came at ten o'clock and left at six o'clock the next morning, but there was no evidence that anybody had been there. The maintenance of the whole university was extremely lax.
- L: Was there any place in the general university area that the students or faculty members frequently attended?

- J: Students had to go to the library because there was no student union and there was no place else to go. This was one reason why the library had so much commotion in it. It was because three quarters of the people there were only there because they didn't have any place else to go, and so they wandered in to have fun with their friends, and it kept anybody from getting any serious work done, to have these people milling around in the library all the time. I was sympathetic with them; they didn't have any place else to go, but I did my best to keep them in line and have some quiet place to study.
- L: What do you think were your major contributions to the university?
- J: I think the building up of the book collection. When I came, book collection was extremely weak. The largest part of it was the law collection. Every lawyer who had died in Youngstown from the time the law school started had left his books to the Youngstown College Law Library, so there was a large quantity of law books, but the quality of the collection of books otherwise was poor. I had difficulty getting the administration to allot money for books. The administration was of the opinion that we had a public library right across the street and we didn't need to have money for books. I went out and pounded the streets to get donations to the library and had quite a few of the prosperous members of the community giving books to the library on a regular basis.
- L: How was the university funded before it went state?
- J: The community, as I said earlier, needed a university and welcomed it, so that there were people in the community who were willing to donate. Also, at that time the income tax exemption for giving to an educational institution was very favorable so that you could give away money to the university without it costing you very much. And there were many good donors. The industries in the community were very generous in giving to the university. They wanted a university here just as the prosperous and educated people in the community wanted a university here. And it is not so remarkable that the university grew because it was needed and the people wanted it. There was a demand for the university. It wasn't something that had to be hoisted on to them. You couldn't have stopped it; you couldn't have stopped all of these gifts because the people wanted it, and wanted to do it.
- L: Is there anything that you would like to change?
- J: That question is meaningless to me because my whole attitude in life is to make things the best I can, but if I don't succeed I don't regret afterwards and say, "Oh, if I

had only done so and so." So your question to this particular individual is not of meaning.

L: Is there anything that you would like to add to this interview having to do with the university itself or the general philosophy concerning the university or library work?

J: Well, I was very happy at Youngstown University, and I loved the place. With all its flaws it is something which I worked hard to develop and I go there all the time now that I am retired, three or four times a week. I use the library still and I buy a parking sticker every year so I can park there. I park there and walk downtown from the university just because I love it. I like to be there and I still read the Jambar. Every time I go I see many old friends. I don't meet the new ones as I ought to or if I do meet them, I find out that as I get older I don't remember new people. I don't even remember the old ones. Just yesterday I was in and as I came across the campus a very nice looking lady spoke to me and after I passed her I was ashamed to realize that I met that woman two years ago but I don't have the slightest notion who she is. Even the maintenance workers and the parking attendants are all old friends. They all shout to me from across the street as I go around the place. And I like to go to lunch at the new Wicker Basket. I must admit those beautiful surroundings and all the people are very pleasant, but it doesn't have quite the warmth that that dirty, old, small, faculty room at the cafeteria had years ago. There was a comradeship there and fun which doesn't exist now. We all had to sit at the same table so we all had to get acquainted with each other, whereas now I go in and sit down at a table thinking that I will attract a group of other people, but usually one or two come and sit with me, but everybody is divided up into small conversation groups. There isn't a big group anymore at all as there was in the old days.

L: You mentioned heads of different departments. Who was the head of the Spanish department that you were talking about?

J: Mrs. Mills; she was Mrs. Mills then. She was a very active person and very lively.

L: Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW